

1:Gallin E-4,5 (1957-1958) 1966

AD5 Taiwan Hokkien AD5
Formosa AD1

THE SETTING

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like the railroad lines, were all built during the Japanese occupation.

The mountain ranges serve as a kind of climatic divide. The area north of the mountains, which includes the Taipei region, is known for its long rainy season and cold raw winters. In the area south of the divide, and especially around Taichung and the interior mountain region, the weather tends to be milder, with far less rain and many days of bright sunshine.

On the trip south from Taipei to Chang-hua City the train crosses several large rivers which originate in the interior mountains and flow west to the Strait of Formosa. The rushing torrents of water during the rainy season dwindle to a trickle during the dry season, meandering through wide, sandy, and rocky river beds.

At Chang-hua City the traveler must leave the train for a bus headed southwest to the old port city of Lukang. Although the buses leave every fifteen minutes during the day, they are invariably crowded with people and their bundles of produce, fish, a chicken or two, or even building materials.

The thirty-minute trip in an old wooden Japanese bus is made entirely on dirt roads. The ride may be dusty or wet according to the season; but it is always bumpy and noisy. In the dry season strangling dust pours into the bus from all sides. During the wet season, there is always a possibility that the passengers will have to leave the bus and wade while the bus creeps slowly along over the flooded roadbed. Many menthol-distilling factories, brickworks, and small rice mills line the way. The bus must cross many small irrigation canals and maneuver around ox carts. As the bus moves further away from Chang-hua City and approaches the seacoast area of Lukang, a change in the agricultural landscape, resulting from differences in irrigation systems, becomes more and more noticeable. In those places where there is still no irrigation system, there are large areas of dry fields.

After a half-hour wait in Lukang, the traveler boards another, similar bus for the trip to the village, which lies about three miles inland or southeast of Lukang. The uncomfortable fifteen-minute ride ends when the bus comes to a halt in front of the Hsin Hsing village store.

The houses in the village are constructed of bamboo, mud or fired brick, and plaster. The foundations and structural uprights are usually brick; the walls are a latticework of bamboo strips, filled in with plaster which is a mixture of mud and cow dung. The plaster filling is usually whitewashed. Sometimes the main supports are not brick but heavy bamboo poles. Newer houses, and the older houses of the wealthy, generally have roofs of cement tile, while the oldest and poorest houses have thatched roofs. Houses made of mud bricks are always thatched.

THE SETTING

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 551 together—in a compound or in several houses in close proximity; they
 361 are also usually in the same *lin*. (See Chapter 3 for a complete discus-
 618 sion of kinship patterns in the village.) For example, most of the
 614 Huangs live in a single very large house, the Shens occupy several
 361 separate houses which form a sort of compound, and the Shih live in
 • [342] adjacent houses. However, not all of the village's K'ang families came
 into the village at the same time or trace their descent through a
 common ancestor, nor do all of the Shih families, nor all of the
 Huangs. The lack of a common demonstrated ancestor and therefore
 of a *tsu* relationship on the part of some families with the same sur-
 name is also evidenced by their separate locations in the village as can
 be seen with the several K'ang family groups and the two Shih family
 lines. The village map shows the tendency of related families to cluster
 together as closely as possible.

342 The houses of the villagers, at least the original sections built, are of
 one basic type; they vary mainly in size. The basic structure is a single
 length of rooms, with the ancestral-worship room in the center, flanked
 by one or two rooms on either end which are used for sleeping and
 cooking. Many houses in the village have been enlarged by the addi-
 tion of wings which give the dwelling an L or U shape, but most of
 them were originally built according to the basic plan.

When a family increases, as when it is extended through the mar-
 riage of sons, the house is usually enlarged. As the family continues to
 increase, more and more wings are added when finances permit. Some-
 times these wings are added in a fairly orderly way, and sometimes
 they are added in such a random fashion as to make the house a kind
 [592] of maze. Each household or nuclear family then has its own apartment
 in the large house. However, there are only three houses in Hsin Hsing
 which have been enlarged in this manner. (See Figures 1 and 2 for
 diagrams of enlarged houses.)

342 Other families tend to build new houses near the original family
 621 house rather than add wings. Over the years, each of these individual
 houses is expanded to fit the new housing needs of the growing family.
 Interspersed throughout the village are the smaller houses of families
 which are either made up of very small groups or are completely
 unrelated to any other family in the village.

621 However, relationships between village families cross kinship and
 575 even village lines. For example, several kinds of associations draw
 unrelated village families together: a Mother-Father Association which
 aids member families at the time of a death; sworn brother groups;
 moneylending societies; a Farmers' Association village membership
 unit; small local cooperative pumping station associations and an area
 Water Conservation Association for maintaining irrigation systems;
 and a Mother-Sister Association (somewhat similar to a Parent-

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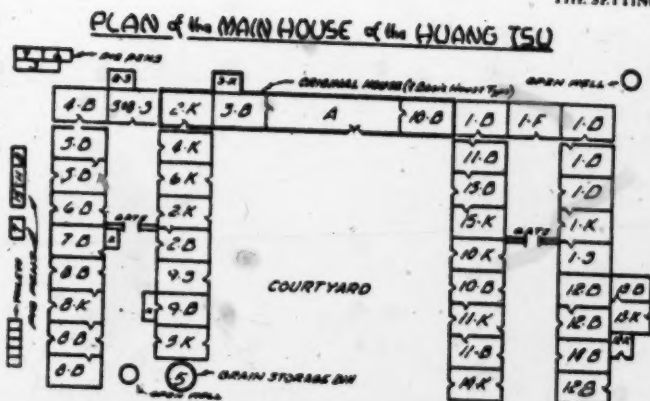


FIG. 1. Plan of the main house of the Huang tsu. A, ancestral worship room, used by whole tsu; B, bedroom; K, kitchen; S, storeroom; F, family room; D, dining room. The numbers 1 through 15 represent the fifteen Huang tsu households which inhabit the Huang tsu main house. It will be noted that the rooms which make up the apartment of each household may be in different parts of the house. The house is built of brick and cement, with a tile roof. Only rooms 10-K, 10-B, 11-K, and 11-B have bamboo and mud walls.

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PLAN of K'ANG BROTHERS' HOUSE

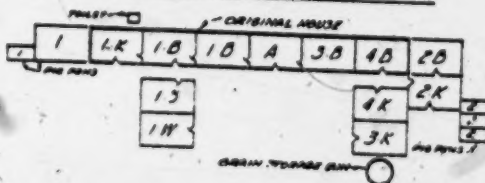


FIG. 2. Plan of the Kang brothers' house. 1, K'ang T'u; 2, K'ang Ting-shan; 3, K'ang Ting-shan's first son; 4, K'ang Ting-shan's second son. A, ancestral worship room, used by all four households; B, bedroom; K, kitchen; S, storeroom, and W, water buffalo shelter. K'ang T'u and K'ang Ting-shan are brothers. A number of years ago they divided their family into two separate economic units; at the same time they divided ownership of their house. Recently K'ang Ting-shan and his sons divided their large family into separate economic units and also divided ownership of their half of the house. (See Chapter 5 for a discussion of family division.)

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Teacher Association) at the district primary school serving the children from Hsin Hsing and other nearby villages. Villagers also have

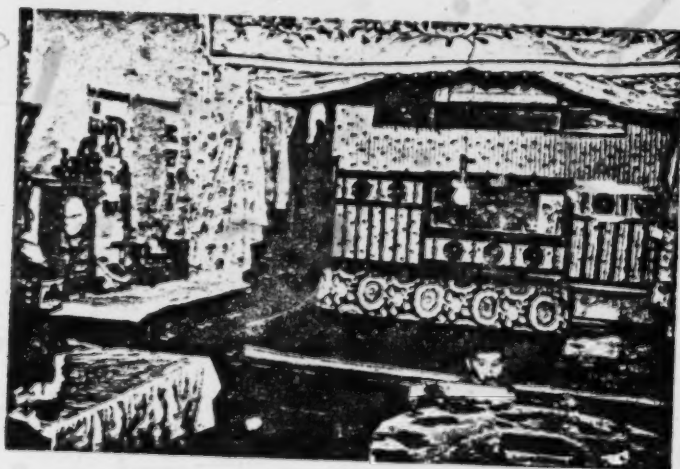
1:Gallin E-4,5 (1957-1958) 1966
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[P.148-A]



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ABOVE: Housebuilding in Hsin Hsing. BELOW: Bedroom of a village land-
lord's married son.



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1:Gallin E-4,5 (1957-1958) 1966
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[P.148-B]

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ABOVE: Itinerant beautician. BELOW: Itinerant artisan making steamers.

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1:Gallin E-4,5 (1957-1958) 1966
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[P.148-C]

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ABOVE: Stacking rice
straw after harvest.
RIGHT: Grinding glu-
tinous rice for holi-
day cakes.



1:Gallin E-4,5 (1957-1958) 1966
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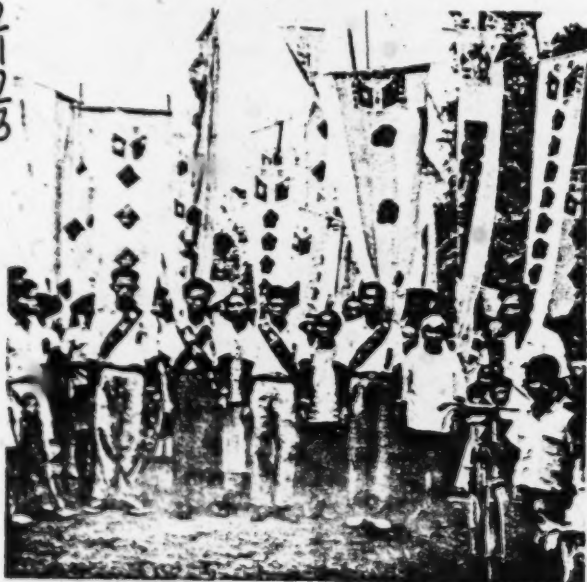
[P.148-G]

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ABOVE: Neighboring village comes to Hsin Hsing to pick up bride. BELOW: Sending boys off to army.

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36 Beyond the Tu Ti Kung temple at the end of the arcade, the path to Hsichichou turns sharply to the right, narrows into a crooked little alley, and then suddenly opens out to the lush green countryside. From here one can see most of the district of Chichou. In the immediate foreground is a cluster of red brick houses which make up the village of Shalun; behind these are the green tile roofs of the Japanese built elementary school and police station; to the right is another cluster of poorer homes belonging to the village of Fantzupu; and in the distant foreground under a great tree is a small Tu Ti Kung temple behind which one can make out the roofs of Hsiachicou among the thickly leaved trees. After the cluttered dirty streets of the town, the scene is one of remarkable beauty. The carefully patterned paddy fields create a framework of order and coherence; the graceful concave roofs of the red brick farm houses bring life to the mass of green; and in the background the massive prominence of the central mountain range gives the whole vista a sense of dignity and proportion.

342 As an introduction to life in Hsiachichou no aspect of the village is more revealing than the village houses. Embodied in the design of the houses and the living arrangements of their inhabitants are the essential dimensions of village life. As the variety of building materials reveals, the typical village house is an aggregate of structures dating from various periods. In most cases the original structure is a long rectangular building partitioned into five parallel rooms. Almost without exception, the central room is the largest room in the house, and is entered by way of heavy double-leafed doors which face

342 either to the south or to the west. This is what the villagers refer
333 to as the kōng-thiā., or "court," and it is here, on a high altar
778 facing the door, that one finds the family's ancestral tablets. In a
342 new house the kōng-thiā is invariably the cleanest, best cared for, and
most expensively furnished room in the house. If the family owns a
radio or a phonograph it will be found on a table in the kōng-thiā;
or if they happen to possess a piece of calligraphy by some notable
this will be found hanging in the kōng-thiā.. Even the use of building
materials will usually reflect the central and public character of the
333 kōng-thiā.. In many of those village houses in which the floors of
778 the kitchen and bedrooms are tamped dirt, the floor of the kōng-thiā:
342 is concrete, while in one of the few houses in which even the bedrooms
and kitchen have concrete floors, the floor of the kōng-thiā is terrazzo.

778 As in so many other areas of life, the people of Hsiachichou think
554 of a house in terms of relative social status. The principles are very
simple. What is to the left of the ancestral tablets is of higher
status than what is to the right of the tablets, and what is near the
778 tablets is of higher status than what is distant from the tablets. The
554 guest of honor sits at the end of the table closest to the tablets
574 facing the door of the kōng-thiā., while the host sits at the end of
the table most distant from the tablets facing the altar and the tablets.
The second most distinguished guest sits to the immediate left of the
guest of honor, or, as the villagers would see it, he takes the posi-
tion on the left side which is closest to the family altar; while the
third ranking guest is placed in the seat to the immediate right of the

778 guest of honor, a position which is lower than the place to the left of
551 the guest of honor because it is on the right hand side of the table,
574 but higher than the second seat on the left side of the table because it
is closer to the altar. The same principles are applied to the assign-
ment of the family sleeping quarters. As the person of highest status
778 in the family, the head of the household takes as his bedroom the room
513 to the immediate left of the kōng-thiā, while his younger brother or
*592 married son will occupy the room to the right of the kōng-thiā. If
the head of the household has both a younger brother and married sons,
the younger brother will occupy the room to the right of the kōng-thiā,
the sons taking as their quarters a room at the end of the house or even
a room in a wing of the house. The living arrangements of the various
members of a household thus serve as a constant and not very subtle
reminder of their relative status in the family hierarchy.

The kōng-thiā is what one might call the public area of the house.

342 It is the portal through which the family carries on its relationships
778 with the world outside of the house. When guests come they enter through
*592 the kōng-thiā, and they leave by way of the kōng-thiā. It is also
[314] by way of the kōng-thiā that a bride first enters her husband's family,
[586] and it is through the kōng-thiā that a deceased member of the family
[764] passes out of the family circle. The other side of a family's life, its
private or domestic side as contrasted with its public side, is centered
*592 not in the kōng-thiā, but rather in the family kitchen. Typically
354 located in one of the two end rooms of the house, the kitchen invari-
ably contains a large red brick cooking stove, the symbol of the domestic

* 572 family. As long as they constitute a single kê, or "family," a man
354 and his brothers and sons will always use the same stove, but as soon
as the kê is divided new stoves must be constructed. The division of
a single kê into several new units is, in fact, most commonly referred
to in Hsiachichou as "the separation of the stove." The stove is both
the symbol and the locus of the kê, and it is inconceivable that two
families should use the same stove. So strong is this identity of
stove and family that great care must be taken lest the family suffer
as a result of the character of the stove. The location of the stove,
the timing of its construction, and its general condition are all thought
[571] of as being intimately related to the fate of the kê. When one
village family learned from a shaman that "there were ants and other
things in their stove," they demolished the structure and threw the
bricks into the river. One of their neighbors explained, "There was
nothing else they could do. A family will never have peace if it does
not have a good stove."

341 Although the new village house is usually built with fairly spacious
• 342 dimensions, no village family would be satisfied to see their home re-
596 main a simple rectangular structure. Their hope is always that their
sons and grandsons will marry and remain a part of the parental house-
hold, and that as a result the house will be expanded to meet the needs
of an expanded family. An explicit manifestation of this hope is to
be seen in the design of the new house. In addition to the large
entrance which leads into the kōng-thiā, the front wall of the house
will always include two smaller doors, one at each end of the house.

341 But when the building is new these doors are not used as entrances to
342 the house; in fact, they are usually closed with brick or mud, whatever
596 the original building material. They are only included in the design
of the house because of the hope that eventually the house will be
expanded with the addition of one or two wings of rooms. The vision
which inspires Chinese domestic architecture is that of a large U
shaped building housing many sons and grandsons and their wives and
children.

A few of the older village houses stand in much the same condi-
tion today as they did the day they were completed. These houses
are the homes of families whose fortunes have given them few male de-
scendants; and those of families whose sons and grandsons have had to
leave the village in order to make a living. In the case of most of
the older village homes, however, at least one and in some cases two
wings have been added to the original building to create a large L or
U shaped structure. Of 15 village houses of twenty years of age or
more, 6 had at least one additional wing, 5 had reached the state of
being balanced U shaped structures, and only 4 remained in their original
rectangular shape. But while a builder's vision of the future of his
house is thus often realized, these expanded homes seldom house the

* 592 harmonious extended family which inspired their construction. For
596 reasons which we will discuss in detail later, brothers will ordinarily
divide their parental family within a few years after the younger
brother's marriage, the result being that by the time the house reaches
its full size the family has long since been split into a number of

- * 121 Of the six houses constructed in the village during the past five years four were simply
178 box like structures built side by side to save the expense of a wall.
596 Since such construction precluded the possibility of later expansion,
• 342 the builders of these houses had evidently given up the vision of a
"great house of many generations and many branches."

182 family's giving serious consideration to many socially acceptable alter-
59 natives.
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The most obvious reason for this concern with social continuity
511 and the reason which is most easily stated by the villagers themselves,
[181] is economic security. The village of Hsiachichou is not impoverished,
[621] but neither is it affluent. The line between the rich and the poor
[242] separates those who eat rice at a meal and those who must mix their
rice with sweet potato. As the villagers themselves would put it,
"Everyone here has something to eat, but no one can afford to eat out
[483] of the middle of the pan." With the exception of those families who
have the advantages of neither land nor education, and who are as a
result forced to earn a living as coolies or coal miners, the people
of Hsiachichou are able to support themselves fairly comfortably.

• [342] The majority of village houses are constructed of brick with sturdy
[207] tile roofs; many village families own a radio or phonograph; a number
[216] of families have their own water supply in the house and one has in-
stalled an electric pump; and all but the very poorest of village
families own at least one bicycle, adequate if not comfortable furniture,
and are able to meet their social obligations with appropriate gifts

[454] and invitations. What the average family in Hsiachichou does not have
is the financial ability to accumulate savings. Their income is
adequate to feed, clothe, and house themselves in a reasonably comfortable
manner, but there is no surplus out of which a family can create a

[426] reserve. When faced with a major expenditure occasioned by a serious
illness, a marriage, the funeral of a senior member, or the need to

178 less than half an acre. Many were tenant farmers who owned no land at
511 all, cultivating the fields of wealthy landlords in return for some
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[427] percentage of the annual yield of the land. Until the relocation of the
Taipei Hsinchu railroad in 1923, a few landless families made a living
transporting local goods down the Tamsui River to markets in Wanhua,
[444] Hsinchuang, and Taipei. The only opportunities for industrial employ-
[346] ment were in the coal mines of Tucheng and Hsinchuang, and the work
178 there was often sporadic and always poorly paid. The generally low
511 standard of living in Hsiachichou was reflected in the construction of
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333 village homes. Although kiln brick and tile had been inexpensively
produced in the Taipei region for at least a hundred years, there was
no one in Hsiachichou who could afford to build a brick house or to
roof his house with tile. Houses were built instead of wattled mud and
roofed with thatch. It was not until the early 1920's that the first
brick and tile house was constructed in Hsiachichou, and the use of
these materials did not become common until the end of the next decade.
Of the 47 houses in Hsiachichou in 1935 only 15 boasted a tile roof, and
of these only 4 had more than one brick wall. As the older villagers
so often put it in describing their former condition, "We were the kind
of people who had to sell our rice and eat sweet potatoes."

*599 Living so close to poverty and yet aware of the luxuries enjoyed
511 by their landlords and the wealthier merchants, many families in
435 Hsiachichou must have been tempted to sell one of their male children
as a biEng-liEng-kià. There was always a ready market for male children
on Taiwan, and the price they commanded was for most village families

*599 ultimate goals and overall responsibilities. The result was that most
*592 female children were given out in adoption despite the fact that this
178 committed them to an unhappy life. Whatever fears a child's parents may
have had about her fate as an adopted daughter could not save her be-
cause they were not the decision makers, and even if they had been it
is doubtful that they could have done other than give the child away.
Most families were so constrained by their limited means and their
goals that there was little room for concern about the child's per-
sonal welfare.

*597 In the years since 1930 this situation has changed considerably.
511 For one thing, the poverty which forced many families to give away
178 their female children as a means of conserving their resources has been

[427] greatly alleviated. Most of the villagers of forty and fifty years
[463] ago earned a living as tenant farmers, but the post-war population
of the village has included a number of skilled workers, several fam-
ilies with fairly large land holdings, several school teachers and
petty officials, and a dozen or more families who own small and fairly
prosperous businesses. Even those who still earn a living on small
land holdings and as laborers are now earning more and living some-
what more comfortably than did their fathers and grandfathers. The
general improvement in conditions in Hsiachichou is apparent in an im-
proved diet, the widespread use of bicycles and radios, and most

• [342] strikingly in the construction of village houses. The thatch roofs
[333] and wattled walls of the early decades of the century have been almost
entirely replaced by tile and kiln brick. Of 49 houses in Hsiachichou

*591 in 1960 only 8 had one or more mud walls, and none of the 49 were
511 roofed with thatch. The average family is still not so well-to-do
178 that they can afford to raise many daughters, and a daughter is still
[342] generally regarded as "something to lose money on." The difference
[333] is that now many families can afford the luxury of losing money on one
or two of their daughters without sacrificing other values.

*591 An equally important change has also taken place in the authority
*592 structure of the kā. Although the senior generations of the family
*593 still usually occupy the position of kā-tiū, they have lost much of
178 their authority over decisions concerning adoption. These decisions
are now most often made by the child's own parents. As in the case of
marriage, the senior members of the family still exert a considerable
influence, and in a few cases the younger members of the family may
leave a decision up to their parents. But while the grandparents are
thus often able to negotiate the decisions they prefer, they are no
longer able to dictate the disposition of their grandchildren. A
woman who is now in her forties told us that when she was married her
mother-in-law told her that she could only keep one of her daughters,
and that she would have to give the rest in adoption. This could not
happen today. A persuasive mother-in-law with firm control of her son
might succeed in getting a daughter-in-law to give away several of her
female children, but a strong willed daughter-in-law could probably
manage to keep all of them if she so desired. As one of the older men
complained to us, "Young people now won't listen to their parents.
They do what they want to do. You can't tell them to do this or that."

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577 wife. He wants the security of a stable and permanent network of human relations.

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[369] The farm houses of Taiwan are symbolic of this attitude toward the family. In Taipei and in the larger market towns there have always been houses designed for rental income, houses for transients who may stay a month or ten years, but they are barren houses designed only for the present occupants and not looking toward the future. In the country, even today, when a man builds a house he follows the old pattern. He builds with a vision of housing under one roof a large and prosperous family of many generations. Farmers are rarely wealthy on Taiwan. Although they are just as likely as anyone else to try to implement their dreams, they do so with a shrewd practicality. Instead of hoarding gold or borrowing money to build the huge U-shaped structure that is to house generations as yet unborn, they build the base of their future, a strong rectangular building. At each end of the rectangle, however, there are indications of the ultimate design—an unnecessary door, a carefully made archway clumsily boarded over until the day it will open into a new wing housing the family of a son or a grandson. The rectangle becomes first an L and finally a U whose arms may be extended again and again.

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824 That part of Peihotien that lies upstream is often referred to as "Brick House Place," a designation that has survived from the building of the first all-brick house. Before that, houses were built of mud over bamboo wattling and roofed with rice thatch. A family who could tear down one of their mud walls and replace it with strong red bricks showed a sign of prosperity; their continuing good fortune could be seen in the replacement of another wall a few years later.

[343] Now only unimportant buildings like pig pens or storage rooms have mud walls and all of the thatch has been replaced with shining tile roofs. There are mud houses left in the other villages of Hotien, but Peihotien exhibits its superiority in a rich display of red brick. Nowadays a new house begins in brick and tile.

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787 The first step a family takes toward building a new house is to summon a geomancer. He is shown the family land and is expected to site the house in the position most favorable to the natural and supernatural phenomena. Evidently these variables are fairly uniform in a small area for nearly all of the houses of Peihotien face in the same direction, away from the river—sad from the point of view of Western aesthetics but undoubtedly well justified in terms of geomancy. Before

Houses and Families

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any construction begins, the family and the geomancer make careful enquiries of priests, the elderly, even the gods, to be sure that the house is not placed on the site of an old temple or shrine. Indignant gods could bring untold misery on the family for generations. When construction is underway, the geomancer supervises the building of the ritually important cooking stove, a large, square, brick structure which is intimately tied to the welfare of the family. If it is clumsily built, or improperly oriented, misfortune or even death may come to family members. The family must also prevent those who bear them ill will from secretly inserting dangerous magical objects in the partially constructed stove. If the carpenters and bricklayers are ill-paid or disrespectfully treated, they too might practice various forms of witchcraft on the stove or on the main roof beam. The welfare of the family in both the present and the future generations is irrevocably involved in the construction of their home.

The original rectangle of a new rural home may vary somewhat in size, floor plan, or interior decoration, but the basic outline is the same for all. In the center of the front wall of each house are double doors which open into the guest hall. In most houses the floor of the guest hall is of beaten earth, the same as the other rooms of the house, but in more affluent homes the hall is distinguished by a concrete floor. The one village home with concrete floors throughout displays a terrazzo floor in the guest hall. This room is the stage on which a family presents itself to the world. Here one often finds a scroll of unexpected quality and such luxuries as a radio or a sewing machine; here also are the material representations of the family's charter, their ancestral tablets. These are flat, rectangular slips of wood, rounded on the top like grave stones, each inscribed in black ink with the posthumous name of a deceased member of the family. In every home these are arranged on a tall, narrow altar table set against the wall opposite the front door. To the foreign eye this altar is a clutter of religious paraphernalia, but there is order here if not neatness. The gods take precedence over the ancestors and their images are thus always to the right of the altar; men take precedence over women and thus the tablets of men are always to the right of those of their wives. Where the tablets are arranged in a small lacquer box, the more recently deceased are at the front of the box; where they are arranged on open shelves, the most distant ancestors stand on the top of the shelf at the head of a pyramid.

Individually, the tables have little significance. They are simply

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3: Wolf F-5 (1959-1961) 1968 AD5 Taiwan Hokkien AD5
Peihotien

Leading from

Houses and Families

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both sides of the guest hall are hallways along which the bedrooms are located. Reflecting the principles of seniority found in the ancestral tablets, the members of the family are assigned sleeping rooms according to their status in the family. The head of the family takes the rooms to the right of the ancestors; his younger brother or married sons, the rooms to the left. An old grandmother usually shares a bed with her grandchildren, enjoying with the warmth of their young bodies the satisfaction that she has by her own efforts produced at least two more generations for the family. Some sleeping rooms in Peihotien are furnished with the traditional carved and canopied wooden beds, massive and often ugly; others contain only Japanese tatami sleeping platforms. The platforms have many advantages, particularly for families with numerous children, since their capacity is practically unlimited. They are also considerably cooler during the stifling summer nights when the old-fashioned, box-like beds become as hot as ovens.

The kitchen is usually located at one end of the rectangle, although some families house it in a shed at the back of the basic structure. Wherever it is, the central feature of the room is the large, square brick stove. Few families have the luxury of a room set aside for dining and are content to take their meals in one corner of the kitchen. If the room is too small, or if the family tends toward elegant living, they eat in the guest hall. Family meals are considerably less formal than Western meals. If the night is hot, a man fills his bowl with rice, tops it with whatever relish or vegetable his wife has provided, and then squats in the cool breeze of the doorway. His wife seldom sits at the table, eating her rice as best she can while supervising the children and watching the soup. The older children may follow their father's example and wander off into the yard, skillfully managing the rice bowl and chopsticks while watching a game of hopscotch. In large families this is the only way the meals can be managed, since it would be impossible for them all to sit down at once. The Chinese custom of feeding the men first is acknowledged but difficult to practice when the men's hours are determined by different occupations. More commonly the food is simply put on the table and whoever is there eats—at the table, if he likes, or on the back stoop, if he prefers.

When a man builds a house, his fondest dream is that within his lifetime one or even both of the wings will be added to the original rectangle to house his sons and married grandsons. In the ideal Taiwanese family several generations of fathers and sons live with

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592 their wives under the same roof, sharing, under the supervision of the
eldest male of the eldest generation, their labor and their wealth. This
ideal is occasionally achieved by the wealthy, but among the poor,
two married brothers rarely maintain a joint household after the death
of their father. The wife of one is too sure that the wife of the other
feeds her children more when it is her turn to cook, or that she shirks
her share of the housework. While the brothers' mother is still living
and active, she can control or at least mediate disputes in the kitchen,
but the loser of any dispute is sure to whisper to her husband about
the favoritism his parents are showing to the other brother's children.
The relationship between brothers is often not sturdy enough to with-
stand the constant harrassment of their wives. As boys, the elder was
required to yield to the younger in all things. If they quarreled, their
561
[562] parents punished the elder, regardless of who was in the right, since he
was supposed "to know better." Yet as adults, their roles are re-
versed. The elder brother makes the decisions and the younger is
expected to acquiesce. As often as not, the younger brother, quite
unused to submission, finds this situation unbearable. As long as their
father is alive, the decisions about managing the family property may
be issued in his name, coating the younger brother's pill and delaying
an open rupture. Often this is not enough and shortly after the
younger's marriage, the brothers divide the family property, from then
on retaining their earnings for the use of their own small families.

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342 In most cases the two families created by the division remain
under the same roof, but a strategic door is nailed shut to separate the
two apartments, or a bamboo fence appears across the courtyard.
They continue to use the guest hall equally, but its neatness and
elegance decline noticeably if there is not a mother-in-law present to
bully the young wives into greater attention. The most dramatic
change occurs in the kitchen. If the guest hall can be considered the
symbol of the larger family, the stove is the symbol of the living
family. Members of a family are defined as those who share a cooking
stove; the colloquial term for the act of family division is literally "the
dividing of the stove." This identification of stove and family is so
important that those who cannot afford to add a room to house the
stove of a newly created family unit build a second stove in the same
kitchen.

Over half of the houses in Peihotien have one of the intended
wings and some have both. For all but two families, only the external

Houses and Families

29

structure of their ideal is complete. Instead of housing a single, united family, the wings are filled with independent units, each with its own stove, each having broken from the main family at the time of a brother's marriage or a father's death. Instead of a large house, the structure can only be properly described as a compound, for in some of the older houses the families are related to each other only three or four generations back. Two families have kept the ideal after the death of their fathers. One is a pair of surprisingly amiable brothers, both of whom work out of the village at well-paid jobs, leaving their two wives, ten children, unmarried sister, and mother in an ample village home. The two wives are so alike they could be sisters and they work together in effortless cooperation. Before we left the village, however, one of the brothers had been transferred to a town too far away to return home more than once a week. His wife, knowing only too well how much business is contracted in what might be called Taiwanese night clubs, packed up her children and the furniture of her dowry and went to join him. Although the division was made with little fuss and continued good will, it was still recognized as a "dividing of the stove." The only family still retaining the eminence of being united under one authority when we left Peihotien was that of Lim Chieng-cua. This is the family with whom we lived and about whom the rest of this book is concerned. [121]

Lim Chieng-cua and his siblings were born and grew up in a small mud house much like their neighbors. In time a good many improvements were made in the house, but the family really wanted a new one, not additions and improvements. Lim Chieng-cua once told me, "Before we built this new house, we had a mud house with a thatch roof. Every time there was a typhoon my father and my older brother's wife and I had to stay up all night to tie the roof down so it wouldn't blow off. Oh, how badly we wanted a new house! We changed two rooms of the mud house to brick, we had a good kitchen, a room for bathing and a big wooden tub for heating bath water. We even had a hand pump and hardly anyone had a pump in those days, but our hearts weren't satisfied. Now we have a good brick house, and yet every time I see a better house, I wish we had a better one too."

It is characteristic of Lim Chieng-cua and his father that when they built their new house it was not quite like any other house in the village. It was a traditional house and in every way worthy of respect.

* 596 but it was undeniably different. At that time the family was not particularly large: Lim Chieng-cua was not yet married and his elder brother wasn't living at home. Speculative neighbors might have expected the Lims to build the usual bottom wing of the U, adding a new wing, if their prosperity continued, when Lim Chieng-cua married. Instead, the Lims built a truly large house, a house that is still the largest in Peihotien. Due to the unusual individuality that has given the Lims a reputation for wisdom and leadership—a habit of seeing as important the same things as their neighbors but not feeling required to follow the conventional paths to their goals—Lim Chieng-cua and his father departed slightly from the usual practice. Rather than building a U-shaped house, they built their house in the form of a hollow square, leaving a small open courtyard in the center. The front of the square, however, deviated in no way from the conventional base for a U-shaped structure, even to the doorways for expansion at each end. They surrounded the house and the drying ground in front with a dignified brick wall, a useful addition in the city, but one rarely found in the northern villages now that bandit attacks are no longer feared. They also built a long, handsome brick pig pen, a final touch which both amused and awed their neighbors.

[351] The Lims' guest hall is quite a large room, as it would have to be [333] to retain proper proportions with the rest of the house. It is floored [356] with lovely terrazzo, neatly and soberly. The floor is swept more often than in the other rooms and mopped every week or so. Puddles left by diaperless children are cleaned up fairly quickly, and concerted effort keeps the chickens and ducks from seeking shelter there. When we first moved into the house, there was no ceiling in the guest hall. The [353] whitewashed walls stretched up to heavy beams richly darkened by years of incense smoke. Unfortunately, in his restless desire to improve and change, Lim Chieng-cua added a ceiling to the room. His neighbors consider it attractive, but I missed the stark dignity of those beams.

* 596 The Lims' guest hall is simply furnished, far more simply than 184 their income requires. The prosperous families of Peihotien buy 352 heavy, overstuffed chairs covered in plastic. In summer they are a torment to sit on for more than a few minutes, and in winter they smell musty and develop miniature landscapes of mold. The Lims, whether from modesty or from a more developed sense of comfort, retain the old rattan chairs that are comfortable year around. The family altar is another matter. Modesty here would not be a virtue: a

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Houses and Families

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man is expected to provide his ancestors with the best he can possibly manage. The Lim altar is tastefully simple, but of excellent wood and careful carving. The top is cluttered with the usual collection of ugly vases, gaudy lanterns, fussy brass candle holders, an elaborately carved wooden stand to hold the half-moon-shaped divining blocks, and some delicate pewter wine cups used only to offer drink to the gods and ancestors. Besides the ancestral tablets, the altar also holds two glass boxes containing images of the Goddess of Mercy and Tu Ti Kung. The latter are only decoration. Although they have vague protective powers, they are not imbued with the significance of the images residing in temples. On the wall behind the altar are a picture of the Eight Immortals and a large panel covered with the character for long life repeated in its hundred different forms. The only other decorations in the room are a Chinese painting on a scroll and various inscriptions painted or pasted over doors and windows to insure the family's good health, prosperity, and fertility.

When my husband and I moved into the Lim family home, we were delighted to be given as our sleeping room the tiny room directly in back of the family altar. The room is separated from the guest hall by only half a wall topped by a lattice screen. There was little chance of our sleeping through any of the religious ceremonies performed at dawn or during the night. Much to my surprise, the sleeping room that should have housed the head of the family became our office. It had been empty since the death of Lim Chieng-cua's father. Later, when I came to understand the structure and tensions of the family, I was impressed by Lim Chieng-cua's discretion, and the diplomacy with which he had solved a vexing problem. At the time, I was simply pleased at the ease with which we had inserted ourselves into the very center of a Taiwanese family. We had little peace and quiet, and no privacy, but for our purposes the situation was ideal.

The remainder of the Lim's front wing is taken up with sleeping rooms—Lim Chieng-cua and his wife and six children on one side, his elder brother's widow, Lim A-pou, her married son and his family on the other. At one end, in a room that would have been the kitchen in a smaller house, is the dining room, one of the few in the village. Its elegance is confined to its title. Though fairly large, the room is cluttered with crocks of pickled vegetables, the big rice bin, a foot-treadle sewing machine, and odds and ends of farm equipment. In the center of the room is a high, round eating table with an assortment of tall stools around it. The stools are drawn from those stacked in the

*596 corner with a dozen or more table tops, stored there until needed in
• 342 the guest hall for big feasts. Off the dining room, in the side wing of
[352] the house, is another sleeping room. This room is occupied most of the
[513] time by Lim A-pou's unmarried son, but he usually has to share
[192] the tatami sleeping platform with visiting children, male relatives, and
whatever hired hands happen to be living in the house. Beyond this
room is the busiest room in the house, the kitchen. Except on the
*596 coldest or stormiest days, the door between the kitchen and the small
354 internal courtyard is kept open for light and ventilation. Most of the
353 floor space is taken up by the huge brick cooking stove which boasts
[252] two, rather than the usual single, shallow cooking pans. One corner is
[372] filled with a heap of long paper strips, residue from Lim Chieng-cua's
cement bag factory. The paper is twisted into hanks and fed into the
stove by the women as they cook, by children when they can be
caught, and, on cold days, by the men, if they have time to lounge
before the evening meal. The walls are dark and dirty with accumula-
[A18] tions of smoke and grease. Baskets, rice cake molds, tea kettles, and
[352] various other cooking utensils hang at random from pegs. Two closed
[412] cupboards hold dishes, rice bowls, cups, chopsticks, and bits of food
that need protection from the animals that wander into the house. The
kitchen has a convenience that is the envy of every woman in the
village and that was a source of considerable misgiving to me. The
[312] well and the open cistern into which the water is pumped are located
[231] in the kitchen itself. My uneasiness arose from the fact that the next
[54] room contained, besides another small stove for the preparation of pig
[177] food, the Japanese style toilet. What we euphemistically refer to as
"night-soil" is stored until needed for the fields, or until the pit is full,
not ten feet from the water supply.

*596 I was never sure just how the wing across the back of the house
342 had been used formerly, but it may have been the original location of
122 the cement bag factory. When we arrived, part of it was used for
114 storage and part of it was taken up with the small bathing room. The
storage room was cleared for us to use as a dining room and a
sleeping room for our cook and our interpreter. Our long-suffering
cook acquisitioned an alcove in the hallway to the bathing room for
her coal oil stove. The rest of the back wing was occupied by another
family of renters during the first part of our stay, but when they left
we took over this space to house our expanding staff and to provide
ourselves with a much needed testing room.

chapter 6

[p. 59]



LIM SO-LAN:

A

SECOND

WIFE



About twenty years ago a former villager who still owned a building site in the heart of Peihotien decided that his land should be earning money. On it he built a long brick building that looks very much like a warehouse. He cut four doorways in the front and a smattering of windows and fitted the interior into four separate apartments. Two of the apartments were sold to their present occupants; the other two are leased by families who came to the village within the last ten years. All four families are fragments. They each have an ancestral altar in their guest halls, but two of the altars, though littered with images of gods and ritual paraphernalia, lack ancestral tablets. There are ancestral tablets on the other two altars, but the surnames on them are not the same as that of the family who burns incense before them. The apartments are spacious, in good repair, and in all but one case show evidence of an adequate income. But, the people who live in them are not families in the Taiwanese sense of the word. Their past is not tied to a neat line of descendants; their present is in a house that displays no confidence in the future—wings cannot be added on to an apartment to shelter future generations of married sons and grandsons.

Lim Hue-lieng bought the largest apartment in this row house when he moved his second wife and his daughters out of his father's house. Lim So-lan still lives there with her two daughters, her eldest daughter's husband, and her three grandchildren. She is in her middle forties now and looks her age. She wears the modified Western clothes

291 However, when a young woman dresses for town, it would be
369 difficult to distinguish her from her big city sister.

Everyone agrees that people are no longer thrifty regarding clothes. Now people "dare to spend money" (see Glossary C).

Dwellings and Community Buildings

346 There is only one real community building in Sanlei village, the temple which is described more fully in

347 Chapter VII. There are two public stores but these can be little distinguished from the main room in a standard dwelling. The barber shop is merely one room in the barber's house.

• 342 The materials used to construct dwelling units are an indication of historical sequence. The original buildings were constructed of bamboo stakes, pounded in the ground, with mud daubed on both sides, and roofs of thatch. Two one-room rude huts in the village still represent this construction method.

The next development was mud brick, plastered on each side, with a thatch roof. More recent has been the substitution of a tile roof. Over a third of the houses in the village are of this style construction. Since the walls are subject to weathering, the house has an economic life of only thirty years and must be replastered every ten years. Many people say these houses are coolest in

- 342 summer and warmest in winter. Starting in the late forties, houses have been constructed of fired brick, always with tile roofs. A brick factory is located on the main road just over half-way to Hsin Tien. Fired-brick house types now constitute a majority in the village.

The original floors in all the house types described above are pounded earth but cement floors are now being added. The first room to be floored is either the kung t'ing (main room) or kitchen. Bedrooms still are seldom other than pounded earth.

Under the stimulation of the government, a new style house is being built entirely of reinforced concrete: floor, walls, and roof. The government requires use of one of three stock plans. The houses are designed to eventually become row houses with a common wall, i.e., reinforcing rods protrude in appropriate places. Additionally, each house is designed to eventually reach three

[452] stories, each preceding roof becoming a floor. If someone builds a house as specified by the government, he can obtain a low-interest house loan. This stimulation has resulted in the construction of three recent houses in Sanlei. The advantages of the house style which include the natural cleanliness of all cement floors, long economic life, and relative resistance to typhoons must be balanced against the disadvantages of a pervasive dampness and chill

• 342 in winter.

351 Most of the dwellings of farmers have a pounded
[243] earth courtyard for drying rice and as a place to work.
[474] Recently, the farmers' association has provided half the
cement necessary to cover the courtyard and many villagers
have taken advantage of the offer, the first in 1961.
Borrowing the use of a cemented courtyard is now quite
343 common. Farm outbuildings such as pig pens are extremely
crude with only partial walls and a thatch roof.

342 A dwelling typically has a regular sequence of
development. The first step is a rectangle 15 feet deep
and 20 or more feet wide. The main room will be the lung
t'ing which is a combination of sitting, dining, ancestral
worship, and general main room in the house. The usual
room dimensions are a 15 foot depth and a width of 10 or
15 feet. Extended out on either side are other rooms,
each 10 or 15 feet wide. Such rooms will be added as
needed until the building is three or five rooms long with
the lung t'ing in the center accessed through a central
door. One of the rooms is a kitchen but if there are
only two rooms, the kitchen may be a temporary attached
lean-to.

187 It is best to have a geomancer orient the house for
good luck (see Chapter VII). Many people skip this step
by copying the orientation of nearby houses although this
is contrary to the theory of geomancy (ti-li or feng-shui).

787 Several villagers have some knowledge of ti-li standards which are considered sufficient for houses but a professional geomancer is usually consulted to orient the stove.

787 Normally, geomancy is referred to as feng shui (literally, 192 wind and water) with respect to orienting graves. Ti-li

761 is an alternative expression which refers to the activi- 354 ties of the same man (geomancer) when he is engaged in activities not related to death. There is some reluctance to connect the stove, for instance, with death. Nevertheless, both terms are sometimes used for the stove or house but only feng-shui is used for graves or temples.

- 342 As more space is needed in the house, ten-foot wings are extended at right angles from each end of the main section on the side of the building with the kung t'ing door. Each added room is about 10' by 10'. The wings may eventually become five or six rooms long. The long-range aim is a "u-shaped" building with a courtyard in the central partially enclosed area. Several village dwelling units have reached this stage (One is illustrated in Figure 12). Others may assume the shape of an "L" before the last wing is added (A distribution of various shapes can easily be seen in Figure 2). Since the large "u-shaped" building is predicated on the basis it will be occupied by a single kinship group, many buildings never complete the full development cycle as families do not expand as expected. The most modern houses of concrete,

- 342 described above, do not permit this pattern of development while other village houses just deviate from the dominant pattern.

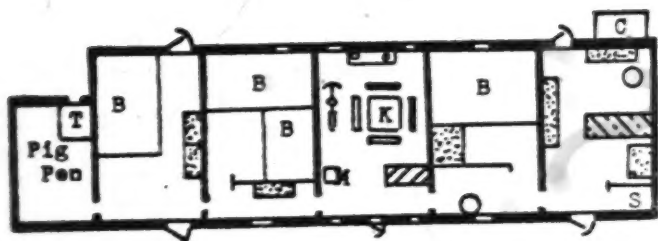
354 All but three village houses have electricity. Most houses have one outlet in each room while those with fewer outlets, maintain one in the kitchen and lung t'ing. One light is usually left burning all night in each house.

342 In order to indicate the kind and extent of house-
592 hold furnishings, a dwelling at the intermediate stage of development is indicated in Figure 4, i.e., the lung t'ing base of a planned "u" only is complete. In this household, fourteen people reside in a stem family consisting of a man and his wife, their son and his wife, and ten grandchildren. Their goal is expansion of the house into the previously described pattern as the descendants marry. Four of the grandchildren are male.

342 The house also reveals other typical patterns.

Alternating rooms have an outside entrance and each room
342 may be reached from any other without going outside. Al-
514 though separate out-houses were common in the past, there
[177] is now a tendency to have a small attached room with a Japanese ceramic toilet inside. In this case, human waste is discharged into a concrete pit which can be reached through a manhole outside. A house will also have an internal bucket collection system because most people do not like to go out at night.

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- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| S - Shower | T - Toilet |
| [Hatched Square] - Closet or Shelf | B - Bed |
| [Hatched Square] - Kitchen Stove | C - Chicken Coop |
| [Diagonal Lines] - Desk | K - Immortal's Table and Benches |
| [Dotted Rectangle] - Ancestral Table | M - Sewing Machine |

Figure 4. Typical Sanlei House Plan with Furnishings

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[77] A small room with a hard surface or wooden floor for baths is often found in the kitchen although a kind of dishpan in the kitchen is also often used. Mixed bathing, Japanese style, is not uncommon but is not typical either and only occurs within a single family. Young to middle-aged husbands and wives sometimes bathe together while completely disrobed, occasionally with very small children. Older women often bathe with small children. However, there is seldom mixed bathing after age ten except for the aforementioned married couples.

356
[55]
[23]
[24] Most houses are very dirty and cluttered as a cluttered house is a sign of wealth. Chickens and ducks leave droppings as they wander in and out, sometimes accompanied by small pigs.

• 342
592 The plans of the above house also reveal a final pattern. A single dwelling may contain many households. As family division occurs, maximum flexibility in room assignment can be achieved because many rooms have an external entrance. Since there is no plumbing, any room can easily become a kitchen. In spite of division, internal doors will seldom be blocked off unless a portion of the building is rented out to someone who is not a relative although this is relatively rare, only two cases in Sanlei village. There will seldom be more than one lung t'ing in a single dwelling unit. Internal bearing walls, those marking the regular ten and fifteen foot dimensions, are heavy and extend from floor to ceiling. Other internal walls are plywood, about six feet high, commencing one foot off the ground. The room arrangements tend to allow little real privacy but do promote circulation of air in hot weather.

Personal Property

511 In addition to the above, it seems worthwhile to cite a few figures with reference to material possessions to indicate the economic prosperity of the village. The use of certain key items as an economic index is a normal
511 technique in assessing prosperity. For example, the United
207 Nations Statistical Yearbook indicates that the number of radios in Taiwan increased from 77,000 in 1953 to

596 plan of the dwelling unit, the previously described U-shaped building. The building is divided into rooms (10' x 10' up to 15' x 15') based only on the roof-bearing floor-to-ceiling walls but some rooms are partitioned with partial walls into smaller subdivision. Each nuclear family indicated on the diagram individually owns the rooms marked with its identifying letter. It can be noted that since there are six families, there are six kitchens, a separate kitchen being part of the definition earlier posited for each household. The lung t'ing in the center is owned jointly by all the compound members.

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• 342 The building has developed in the manner suggested in a previous discussion. The original building consisted only of the three rooms in the center of the base of the "U." Additional rooms have been added to the original building at each end and then, by extending the wings. The various households have been established at various periods by a process of division. E's parents and his siblings moved to Taipei for a period of time while only E and his family of procreation returned. Obviously, E's father has more rights to rooms than E but space was easily made for E on his return. Occasionally, there has been some juggling of rooms since each room is owned by a separate household.

[769]
[514] However, the lung t'ing is owned jointly by all and used by any member unit for worship or entertaining guests.

769 or special religious occasions, food sacrifices will vary in elaborateness according to the importance of the event. Paper money is often burned in a metal pot on the kung t'ing floor for the benefit of both gods and ancestors. Life crises events such as birth, death if not accidental, engagements, and weddings are all solemnized in the kung t'ing.

778 One should not believe however, that the kung t'ing
• 342 is a cherished and sacred room which is always approached with reverence. It is a common room, second only to the kitchen in frequency of use. Bicycles and other valuable goods are kept in the room while pickled radishes and home-made soy sauce may be stored in crocks under the ancestral table. Children often play in the room and the ever-present chickens wander in and out leaving droppings. Since the room is frequently owned jointly by more than one household, no one person truly feels it is his responsibility to keep it clean.

771 In one sense, the room furnishes a clue to the general approach to religion found in the village; it is elaborate but not well-maintained. One performs all the proper rituals but one is skeptical about their efficacy. Everyone half-believes and half does not believe in ancestors, magic, and religion. Older people are more interested in religion than younger people and women are more interested than men although there is considerable variability related to personality in both instances.